SUBJECT

Cession of territory;disputed sovereignty over non-contiguous territory--Turkey and Persia.

DATE

2/19/31--

CASE NUMBER

767.9114

JACKET No. 1

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1—1235

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1930

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 767.9115/28 FOR #386

FROM Persia (Hart) DATED Feb.19, 1931

TO NAME

1—1127 GPO

767.9114/1

REGARDING:

Question of the territory to be ceded by each country in the settlement of the Turco-Persian boundary dispute.

Wi

Tehran, Persia,

No. 888. February 18, 1921.

Confidential

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington.

Sir:

Referring to my previous despatches concerning the Turco-Persian boundary dispute, I have the honor to report that, as far as I am aware, no further developments appear to have taken place. However, I present in the following paragraphs some of the influences bearing on this vexed question as they suggest themselves, though of necessity it involves a certain amount of repetition and stating of the obvious for the purposes of clarity.

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The chief difficulty in dealing with this subject is the paucity of definite information obtainable, which lack has been much accentuated by the departure of the former Turkish Ambassador, Hamdyeh Cherif Bey, who so kindly offered many illuminating remarks during his stay in Teheran.

Nevertheless, as reported in my despatches, a few points seem to be quite clear.

That Turkey is keenly desirous of obtaining the Persian or southern and eastern slopes of Little Ararat, ostensibly in order to eliminate the entire district as a Kurdish stronghold, has been too much stressed in Turkish public and private statements to require emphasis here. On the other hand it is not clear how strongly Iranian feels that the loss of this small area would affect Iran's strategic position in the Lake valley, in particular, and northern and western Persia in general.

The views of Colonel Arfa on this point (see my despatch No. 160 of September 20, 1933) were very concrete and the Department will recall that he believed that both the Persian General Staff and the Foreign Office shared his deep suspicion that Turkey looks at this strategic position with a future contingent of Persian Azerbaijan in mind. But Colonel Arfa is first a soldier, and I am not at all sure that the Persian Foreign Office is not seriously contemplating a trade. This is especially true since it is well within the bounds of possibility that Turkey will force Persia to give in on this point if she does not do so otherwise. The reported

encampment or garrison of Turkish troops on the Persian slopes of Little Mount Ararat (see despatch No. 555 of January 28, 1931), strongly lends credence to this hypothesis. Furthermore, Feroughi has admitted that Persia "had accepted in principle" the proposal to give up Persia's Ararat district. This admission of the Foreign Minister is the more convincing and significant when judged in the light of the reported occupation of that district by Turkish troops referred to above.

There have been frequent public and private references to the proposal that Turkey should compensate Persia for her Ararat district by giving a large and fertile area of Turkish territory further south. The bargaining over the amount of this compensation is, no doubt, an important factor in these negotiations, as in such matters all countries, especially Oriental ones where appearances are given such weight, may be expected to demand a tangible quid pro quo. However, I believe that the real kernel of the bargaining lies not in the size and location of the Turkish territory to be given to Persia but in the question of the Trebizond road.

Persia is naturally extremely anxious that a good road be built on the Turkish portion of this historic route from Azerbaijan to the Black Sea. It is the natural economic outlet of northern Persia. I have even heard it suggested that a railway also is being considered.

To be sure there is under construction the Erzerum

road,

road, which is to run from Tabriz, south of Lake Urumia, and across the Iraq frontier to the railhead at Khanikin, and I understand that all but about fifteen or twenty miles on the Persian side are completed. This last bit runs through very difficult country and there is a much longer stretch on the Iraq side on which the work is proceeding very slowly owing to the straitened financial position of Iraq, as well as the physical obstacles in the way of its completion. When finished this Persadun route will, however, never be as economical an outlet for northern Persia as would be a good Trebizond road, since Trebizond, a seaport, is not much further than, if as far as, Khanikin from which a long rail haul is necessary to reach the sea.

This brings me back to Persia's self evident anxiety for the opening of the Trebizond road, especially since, as the Department is aware, Persia at present is for all practical purposes the only outlet for north Persian produce and therefore can fix its own price. Persia's discomfort in this situation is too obvious to call for comment.

Should Turkey build the Trebizond road a great part of this compulsory and unremunerative trade with Russia would go to the Turkish port, doubtless to the profit of Turkey. Thus, if the construction of the Trebizond road would not entail too great an expense, it would appear that both Turkey and Persia would only benefit financially by such a venture.

Conversely,

Conversely, in the event of such a road being constructed, Russia would lose much of its lucrative control of northwestern Persia and, therefore, will no doubt endeavor to prevent the building of that road.

I might mention here the view which has sometimes been offered that the U. S. S. R. desires Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan to be strong and mutually peaceful, and if they cannot be kept friendly to Russia she none the less needs them as protection from the south. What foundation if any there may be in this hypothetical policy, I doubt that it has perceptibly influenced the Soviet toward a more friendly attitude in regard to the Trebizond road project, and I feel that my previous surmise, namely: that Russia is whole-heartedly opposed to such a project, is correct.

When it comes to the relationship between Turkey and Russia as regards this question, I am almost wholly at sea in the absence of any concrete or even suggested information to go upon. At the British Legation one hears that Ankara has cooled considerably in its attitude toward the Soviets during the last year. Hamdouh Chevket Bey suggested as much last summer, but added that Turkey could not afford to offend Russia.

Such vague and intangible allusions are not of much help in estimating the triangle of conflicting interests discussed in the previous pages. By this triangle, which to be sure is based largely on assumptions, I mean that Persia desiring freedom from

economic

economic dependence on Russia appears willing to trade her strategic position in the Ararat district for the Trebizond road; and Turkey, keenly anxious for the control of the entire Ararat district is perhaps willing to build the road but is afraid of these irritating Russia.

As I said above, the weakest link in this chain of reasoning lies in the absence of any definite information on Turco-Russian relations and, therefore, the unknown quantity of how far Turkey may flaunt Russia with impunity.

Respectfully yours,

Charles C. Hart.

Copy to L. I. C., Paris.
Copy to American Embassy, Istanbul.

HH/T.

A true copy of the signed original.

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

767.91/14/2

SEE 767.91/59 FOR #444

FROM Persia (Hart) DATED Mar.17, 1931

TO NAME

1—1172 ers

REGARDING:

Question of the territory to be ceded in the settlement of the boundary question between Persia and Turkey.

W1

Teheran, Persia,
March 17, 1931.

No. 444.

Confidential

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington.

Sir:

With reference to my previous despatches concerning the Turco-Persian frontier, I have the honor to report that according to a current but as yet unconfirmed rumor, Turkish troops are said to have penetrated 24 kilometers into Persian territory near Mount Ararat a few days ago ostensibly in pursuit of Kurdish bandits from the Turkish side of the line.

The British Consul at Tabriz, who communicated to this Legation this reported penetration, added that he had been told that the Persian troops stationed in and about Tabriz had been rushed to the Maku area southeast of Ararat.

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These reports were given some color by the rumor in Teheran that all available trucks in town had been commandeered to carry troops from the capital. Colonel Dodd, the British Military Attaché, had inquiries made and learned that such orders had actually been given but were later partially countermanded. It is also said that a number of truck loads of ammunition have been sent to the north.

On March 17, I had occasion to call on both Foroughi, the Foreign Minister, and later on Musrev Bey, the Turkish Ambassador, when the frontier was mentioned.

As to the reported penetration of Persia, Foroughi did not admit that Turkish troops had entered Persian territory but said that some Kurdish bandits had crossed the Persian frontier a few days before. But to Foroughi this must be an unpleasant subject at best and I doubt that he would even be willing to admit, as reported in previous despatches, that there are Turkish troops encamped on the Persian slopes of Little Mount Ararat.

Feeling that he would naturally desire to be reticent on this score, I confined my talk to the progress of his conversations with the Turkish Ambassador on the boundary question. He said they had had many discussions on the subject but had made no progress. Somewhat to my surprise Foroughi said that the trouble was that Musrev Bey "has no power to settle anything", adding that being fresh from Turkey himself, he was thoroughly familiar with the political situation there. In Turkey, Foroughi declared all powers are vested in

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the military which controls foreign relations as well as all other administration. Foroughi's remark concerning Husrev Bey is interesting since the Foreign Minister is, as far as I know, entirely sincere and I do not believe that he would attempt to mislead a disinterested observer like myself.

In my previous despatches I have indicated that I do not regard Husrev Bey as comparable to his predecessor. He seems always to be endeavoring to give the impression of importance and does not quite succeed. But as Husrev Bey is reported to be a close friend of Kemal Pasha, a report which is confirmed by the British Legation, I am a little undecided what to think of Foroughi's remark.

When I called on him later, Husrev Bey also said that there had been a great many talks on the frontier question but that the Persian Government, though accepting in principle, the cession of the Persian Ararat territory, had shown little real inclination to get the matter settled. He said that Turkey only wanted an area of five by eight kilometers on the Persian slope of Little Mount Ararat in order to control certain connecting mountain paths used by the Kurds and was willing to give in exchange Turkish territory in the south ten times as large. He had discussed every phase of the question with the Ministers of the Court and Foreign Affairs, supplementing his explanations with the use of maps, but with little apparent success.

In his conversation with me, Husrev Bey endeavored to point out, as he had to the Persian Government, that

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it was in the interest of both Turkey and Persia to suppress the Kurds and that Ararat was of no basic strategic importance to Persia in a frontier hundreds of miles long. But I remain unconvinced and daresay that as mentioned in my previous despatches, the Persian Government also takes an entirely different view from that suggested by the Turkish Ambassador. The latter appeared also to make a particular point of urging upon me the legal propriety of his Government's action in maintaining military outposts in the Little Ararat region. He pointed out that there had been lengthy discussions between his Government and Foroughi while the latter was Persian Ambassador at Ankara, that these discussions had resulted in the signature of a protocol regarding boundary questions and that when signing such protocol it was recognized that an agreement had not been reached with regard to three disputed areas. The forty square kilometers in the Little Ararat was, he said, one of these disputed areas and Turkey naturally claimed its right to operate as far as the eastern boundary thereof; it had already done so last summer, at the time of the 1930 Kurdish troubles, and it still maintained small military outposts in the area to control certain key paths used by the Kurds when travelling on the eastern slopes of Little Ararat.

The protocol" to which Munaver Bey referred is, no doubt, the so-called Turco-Persian Frontier Agreement of April 9, 1929, referred to in current despatches from this Legation and from the Embassy at Istanbul. (Please see particularly Mr. Grew's despatches Nos. 721 and 753 of April 24 and June 5, 1930, and Mr. Williamson's despatch No. 693 of July 26 of the same year). As reported in Mr.

Grew's

Grew's second despatch; Article 1 of the Agreement described the frontier; Article 2 sets up a Mixed Commission to demarcate it; and Article 5 prescribes how the three "disputed zones", mentioned in Article 1, shall be allocated. The description in Article 1 indicates that the first of these disputed zones, or areas, is in what is generally spoken of as the Little Ararat region, the other two being to the southeast in the Mt. Sourave and Kutur regions.

Referring to the Bubria-Trebizond road, Khosrev Bey agreed that Persia was very anxious to have this opened but said that the Persians did not seem to comprehend that it involved a great expenditure for an impoverished Turkey, especially were a modern port to be built at Trebizond. He referred nevertheless to a possible future Trebizond through which most of the trade of northern Persia might pass and expressed the opinion that his Government would not object to granting extensive "free port" privileges there.

While the Turkish Ambassador and Forought did not directly confirm my views, I am still inclined to the opinion contained in my despatch No.286 of February 19, 1931, that the opening of the Trebizond road looms larger in Persia's interest than any territory which she may receive in exchange for the Persian slopes of Little Mount Ararat.

The British Military Attaché said that according to the Turkish counselor, Djevad Bey, an offer of settlement made by Persia actually had been accepted by Turkey and that when the Persian Government brought up entirely new

<u>points</u>

points the patience of his Government was exhausted. I endeavored to obtain a confirmation of this from the Ambassador but he only went so far as to say that Persia had accepted in principle the relinquishment of Persian Ararat, a fact of which I have been aware for some time.

If, however, Djevad Bey's remark may be taken at its full face value, I should not be surprised to see increasing penetration of Persia by Turkish troops in the Ararat district until Persia gives in on this question.

Respectfully yours,

Charles C. Hart.

MM/J
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Copy to Embassy, Istanbul.

Copy to E. I. C., Paris.

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NOTE

SEE 767.9115/43 FOR #1029

FROM Persia (Hart) DATED Jan.28,1932

TO NAME 1—1127 O.F.C.

767.9114/3

REGARDING: Turkish-Persian exchange of lands to settle various differences.

Substance of Persian F.O. communique stating that during recent negotiations in Teheran, Persia ceded to Turkey a piece of land in mountainous region of Agridagh in return for lands in the region of Bajergueh.

Meanwhile in the region of Kotur where the border line was undertermined and long mooted between the two Govts., the Turkish Govt. agreed to give a part of contested territories into the possession of the Persian Govt. Border line was, therefore, determined in that territory and the former disputes were entirely settled.

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Teheran, Persia, January 28, 1932.

No. 1029.

Confidential

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington.

Sir:

The Turko-Persian frontier question, I have the honor to report, is at long last settled. The settlement was made with the personal approval of the Shah. The principal negotiators were the Foreign Ministers of the two countries. The definite "accord" was signed at four o'clock on the night of January 22-23. There was signed also at the same time a treaty of arbitration.

The semi-official Teheran newspaper IRAN of January 26 adds that: "The new treaties are signed and exchanged between His Highness Foroughi and His Excellency Tewfik Rushdi Bey will be submitted promptly to the Medjliss."

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The prospective visit to Teheran of Tewfik Rushdi Bey, Turkish Foreign Minister, was reported in my despatch No. 1004 of January 6. He arrived on January 17 and, as the guest of the State, was lodged in the residence of the Minister of War. That evening he dined with Foroughi, and after dinner there was an exchange of mutually complimentary speeches the texts of which were carried the following morning in crying headlines by the entire Teheran press. Negotiations were begun that afternoon (January 18), and at sun-down (it was Ramazan) the two Foreign Ministers were received by the Shah who, departing from usual custom, retained them for dinner. A picture of Gazi Mustapha Kemal was presented.

The four days, ending with the signature of the treaties, must to Tewfik Rushdi Bey have been a kaleidoscopic passing of strange faces and many drafts of disputed articles. He had luncheon with the Minister of War, the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires and his own Ambassador and dined at the Municipality, the Iran Club (again with Foroughi as host) and the Turkish Embassy. The dinners were followed by receptions to which all official and social Teheran were bid to come and came. He interviewed the correspondents, speaking with a directness which won him the full sympathy of the press. Junior officials of the Foreign Office were pushed to extraordinary, quite un-Ramazanlike efficiency, working at their desks till last calls for official dinners sounded.

That the accords had been signed was made known on January 23, and on the morning of the following day, the

date

date scheduled* for the departure of Rushdi Bey and his party by special airplanes for Baghdad, the following mutually agreed-to Foreign Office communique was published:

Now that His Excellency Dr. Tewfik Rushdi Bey, the honorable Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, has made a trip to Persia to communicate to His Imperial Majesty the ShahinShah, May our Souls be Sacrificed for Him, the expression of fraternal sentiments of His Excellency the Ghazi, Mustapha Kemal, the august President of Turkey, and to convey, on behalf of the Turkish Government and people, to the Persian Government and people, an expression of the sincere friendship existing between the two countries;

And, following His Excellency's friendly visits to and amicable negotiations with the statesmen of the Imperial Government;

Both parties availed themselves of the opportunity, conforming to the desires of the two nations, of which the sacred designs of the two illustrious supreme heads of the two countries are the exponent, to strengthen the ties of mutual friendship, to settle all the outstanding boundary disputes and to adopt the best means of solving differences that may arise in the future between the two Governments.

An agreement was, therefore, concluded concerning the entire (Perso-Turkish) boundary, ab initio ad infinitum, in accordance with which the boundary line is basically the same as was agreed upon three years ago in Ankara between His Highness Foroughi and His Excellency Dr. Tewfik Rushdi Bey.

The differences remaining unsettled since then were solved by an exchange of lands, the Persian Government ceding to the Turkish Government a piece of land in the mountainous region of Agridagh in return for lands in the region of Bajarguch.

Meanwhile in the region of Kotur where the border line was undetermined and long mooted between the two Governments, the Turkish Government agreed to give a part of contested territories into the possession of the Persian Government. The border line was, therefore, determined in that territory and the former disputes were entirely settled.

The text of a pertinent accord was, therefore, drawn up and signed by both Foreign Ministers, and it was stipulated that in the spring of next year a mixed commission,

composed

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*That the departure has been delayed by unfavorable flying weather is reported in a current despatch.

composed of the representatives of both parties, should proceed to the boundary to put up signs of demarcation in accordance with the said accord.

As to the settlement of possible future differences His Excellency Dr. Tewfik Rushdi Bey and His Highness Foroughi signed a treaty of arbitration and conciliation after the model now in vogue in international relations.

The delimitation accord and the treaty of arbitration, both written in the French language, will be submitted, after they are translated into Persian and Turkish, in Teheran to the National Consultative Assembly and in Ankara to the Grand National Assembly, for ratification.

Outside the two above-mentioned agreements already concluded His Excellency Dr. Tewfik Rushdi Bey and his honorable suite conducted negotiations with the statesmen of the Persian Government concerning economic affairs, roads and communications, conventions of commerce, establishment and extradition of criminals and prevention of contraband, both parties showing ardent desire to consummate the said conventions and to achieve results useful to both countries.

It was agreed that the necessary studies and negotiations on these latter subjects should be terminated as expeditiously as possible.

Thus was particular agreement reached regarding the three so-called "disputed zones" of this long unsettled frontier, "a phenomenom of procrastination unparalleled even in the chronicles of oriental diplomacy."* That the settlement was, as prognosticated in my above-mentioned despatch of January 6, in the nature of a compromise is now clear.

Turkey has gained its point where most it wanted success--i.e., in the Little Ararat (Agridagh) zone. And Persia has received compensation in the two southern disputed zones of Kotur and Bajerguch (Bazirga, on the Legation's maps, northeast of Rezaieh).

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*Quoted from G. F. Hubbard's "From the Gulf to Ararat", being an account of the labors of the joint British, Russian, Persian and Ottoman "Delimitation Commission" of 1914--published by E.P. Dutton & Company, New York, (1917).

As expressed to me by my new German colleague, Herr von Blucher, Tewfik Rushdi Bey gained his point as to Agridagh largely by convincing the Persian military advisers that, while the cession of the proposed territory would carry with it strategical advantage, that advantage was practically nullified by a factor not sufficiently recognized in the earlier negotiations.

The ceded area in Agridagh, he explained, is cut to the eastward by a chain of low hills running north and south. The Persians wished to retain at least the southernmost of these hills, Baghi Bashi, thus controlling the Bayazid-Khoi road as it debouches onto the Azerbaidjan plain. However, for Turkey to have yielded on this point would have largely nullified the value of the position as a basis for repressive operations against dissident Kurdish tribesmen. And, as a final and convincing argument Rushdi Bey held that through the fortification of a single lone hill, which stands up from the plain a few miles to the eastward and on the Persian side of the proposed frontier, the Persian army would be enabled effectively to control, as a matter of military strategy, both the road and Baghi Bashi hill.

Of the other matters, discussed but not settled by the two Foreign Ministers and of which mention was made in the two concluding paragraphs of the above-quoted Foreign Office communique, by far the most important, if I judge local comment aright, is that of the Trebizond Road. It is now general information that on this subject agreement in principle has been reached and that "there remain only certain technical details to be discussed, phrased and

determined

determined." I gather that the general effect of this agreement is to grant Persia right of free transit along this ancient trade route to seaboard and a "free" port at Trebizond. The importance of these privileges to Persia's national economy has been stressed in my earlier despatches on the frontier question.

To my German colleague, Tewfik Rushdi spoke with special enthusiasm of the understanding with reference to the construction of the Erzerum-Trebizond road. He said nothing of any advantages that might accrue to Turkey from the construction of that highway but asserted it would diminish transportation costs to Teheran by more than half as compared with shipment by way of Bushire and Mohammerah. Transport by way of the latter ports from Europe, he said often involves three transshipments while by way of Trebizond not more than one transshipment will be required. Nothing was said in this conversation, so far as I could learn, of the relief that Persia would receive from its dependency on Soviet trade routes.

Before concluding, I must mention the very sincere regret expressed by Tewfik Rushdi Bey upon learning, during his stay in Teheran, of the transfer of Mr. Grew from Istanbul to Tokio. "Your Mr. Grew", he said, "was as one of my own relatives. We shall miss him more than I can tell you. Since the war your country has sent two great ambassadors to mine, two great friends of the new Turkey. With Admiral Bristol and Mrs. Bristol, whom we all loved, I still correspond. Now, it is with real sorrow that I learn--and that is the phrase used in my telegram from

Ankara

Ankara--of the transfer of Grew whom, also, we had come to love and admire." Then, turning to the Japanese Minister, Rushdi Bey repeated, again with most patent sincerity, his encomium and regret, adding: "I want you to tell your Foreign Office of what I have said. What is our loss is your gain."

1/ In conclusion, I enclose translations of the texts of telegrams of mutual congratulation exchanged, upon the signature of the new treaties, between the Turkish Prime Minister, Ismet Pasha, and Foreign Minister Foroughi, as published in the local press on January 25.

Respectfully yours,

Charles C. Hart.

Enclosure: One, as stated.

File No. 715.

CW/FK

Copy to E. I. C., Paris.

A true copy of the signed original.

TRANSLATION

Enclosure No. 1,
Despatch No. 1029.

To His Excellency Ismet Pasha, Prime Minister, Ankara:

It affords me the greatest pleasure to inform Your Excellency that on this hour His Excellency Tewfik Rushdi Bey and myself signed the accord for the definitive delimitation of the Perso-Turkish boundary line as well as a Treaty of Arbitration between the two countries.

I venture to present to Your Excellency my sincere congratulations and to express my happiness over the great success that has been thus achieved strengthening more than ever before the old ties of friendly relations between the Persian and Turkish people and opening a new era of sincerity between the two countries.

(signed) Foroughi.

REPLY.

To His Highness Mohammad Ali Khan Foroughi, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Teheran:

I have the greatest pleasure in acknowledging the receipt of Your Highness' telegram relative to the signature of the Turko-Persian Delimitation Accord and Treaty of Arbitration. I wish to thank Your Highness heartily for your congratulations and beg to express my own congratulations to yourself.

The only question which was in abeyance between Turkey and Persia has thus been rapidly and definitively settled.

Turkey and Persia are joined together with strong ties of utmost sincerity. This event is not only a firm guarantee of cemented relations between the two countries in the future but also a proof of the usefulness of direct negotiations conducted in good faith and with a firm intention to realize a mutual desire to solve problems between Governments and hence to insure peace.

I share the feelings of Your Highness expressed in your telegram and trust that the old ties of friendly relationship between both countries will gain new strength as a result of this accomplishment.

(signed) Ismet.

Central File: Decimal File 767.9114, Political Relations Of States, Relations; Bi-Lateral Treaties., Political., Turkey And Iran, Cession Of Territory; Disputed Sovereignty Over Noncontiguous Territory., Feb. 19, 1931 - January 28, 1932. February 19, 1931 - January 28, 1932. MS Turkey, Greece, and the Balkan States: Records of the U.S. Department of State, 1930-1944: Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations of Turkey, Greece, and the Balkan States, 1930-1939. National Archives (United States). Archives Unbound, link.gale.com%2Fapps%2Fdoc%2FSC5111389110%2FGDSC%3Fu%3Domni%26sid%3Dbookmark-GDSC. Accessed 20 June 2025.